

Connected North



Canada and Ideas of Land: Online Gallery Visit

Grades 4–8

Program Length: 35-45 Minutes

Summary

This program delves into understanding and exploring artist’ connections to land and leads students to consider their own contemporary, traditional and/or cultural connections of what land means to them. By looking at both 2D and 3D works of art, students will discover how Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists have interpreted their sense of belonging on the land in Canada, and how it is exemplified in their artistic practices. During this visit, we aim to discover, inquire and create works of art that explore how artists are influenced by Canada’s land and people. The artists we focus on include: Christi Belcourt, Manaisie Akpaliapik and Kathleen Munn.

Curriculum Links: Visual Art, Social Studies, Language Arts

PROGRAM BIG IDEA/FOCUS

How are artists and their works of art influenced by Canada’s land and people? In what ways have different artists used visual language to share ideas, express land, nature and materials at different moments in time?

Discover how artists have interpreted Canada’s various regions and how Indigenous artists are influencing the present and past ways of looking and being on the land.

Curriculum Links: Visual Art, Social Studies, Language Arts

Key themes: [to be adapted per grade level]

- Grade 4: Early Societies, Political and Physical Regions of Canada
- Grade 5: First Nations in New France and Early Canada, The Role of Government and Responsible Citizenship
- Grade 6: Communities in Canada, Past and Present, Canada’s Interactions with The Global Community.

Curriculum Links: Visual Arts

The grade 4 through 8 visual arts curriculum addresses formal elements of art/design that increase in complexity with each grade.

- Elements include: Line; Shape & Form; Space; Colour; Texture; Value

In addition, each grade focuses on a principle of design:

- Gr. 4: Emphasis | Gr. 5: Proportion | Gr. 6: Balance | Gr. 7: Unity & Harmony | Gr. 8: Movement

See chart below for some artwork suggestions to connect to the elements or principles.

Key themes in works of art:

Compare works using visual language and compare how they address land, time, place, cultural identity, etc. make connections between interpretations of how the artist interprets land, earth, sky and water.

Images communicate ideas. Visual artists use symbols and imagery to tell stories. Take the time to look closely and to discuss artworks, to figure out how to interpret the language of visual art and artists’ specific voices.

Introduction

“WHAT’S THAT?” – LEARNING FROM OBJECTS

Welcome to the virtual AGO classroom! We will provide an introduction to the gallery, history, land acknowledgement and sense of place.

In recognition of the ancestral lands on which the Art Gallery of Ontario operates, we would like to acknowledge that we are situated in traditional territories. The territories include the Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit River. These are the original owners and custodians of the land which we stand and it is our hope that we as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can be present on this land in an honest, thoughtful and respectful manner in the art world and beyond.

Question/Action:

What ancestral land are you on? Who are the traditional keepers? What does your land acknowledgement sound like?

Works of Art



STOP #1

The Wisdom of the Universe,
Christi Belcourt, 2014



STOP #2

Respecting the Circle,
Manasie Akpaliapik, 1989



STOP #3

Untitled (Cows on a Hillside), Kathleen
Munn, c.1916

STOP #1: The Wisdom of the Universe, Christi Belcourt, 2014



KEY LEARNING OUTCOME: CRITICAL THINKING

Through the critical analysis process and inquiry based questioning, learners will analyze, discuss and interpret a variety of art works to create informed personal points of view while discovering multiple perspectives are possible.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOME: CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

Learners will engage with works by creating artistic responses (visual, sound, writing, movement) that articulate creative and artistic choices, inventive and critical thinking.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Focus on:

The AGO has commissioned and acquired an extraordinary painting entitled *The Wisdom of the Universe* by Christi Belcourt, a Métis visual artist and author who received the 2014 Ontario Arts Council Aboriginal Arts Award at a ceremony held here on July 30, 2014. Belcourt discusses the ecological concerns that inspired the work. All species, the lands, the waters are one beating organism that pulses like a heart. We are all a part of a whole. The animals and plants, lands and waters, are our relatives each with as much right to exist as we have. When we see ourselves as separate from each other and think of other species, the waters and the planet itself as objects that can be owned, dominated or subjugated, we lose connection with our humanity and we create imbalance on the earth. This is what we are witnessing around us. The planet already contains all the wisdom of the universe, as do you and I. It has the ability to recover built into its DNA and we have the ability to change what we are doing so this can happen.

Inventory:

Invite students to look at the painting on the document camera. What 3 adjectives would they use to describe the works that they see? How would they describe the beings in the work?

Think, Pair, Share:

Tell the person beside you ONE adjective you would use to describe the work. Then, on an index card, write down the work and hold it up. Everyone look around to see all the words.

- What is happening in this work? What catches your attention? How do you think the artist created this piece? What is the narrative that you see in the painting?
- What do you think that this artist is trying to communicate about the universe? Make environmental connections. If you were going to tell a story about the wisdom of the land, what story would you tell?

ACTIVITY: COLLABORATIVE FOAMY MURAL

Small Groups

- Divide students up into groups of 2-3. Give the groups some time to brainstorm their story around the wisdom of the land. What wisdom do you think the land could convey?
- Work time—10-15mins: Working in pairs, use your imagination to create a story about the land or could also be to imagine an animal they would like to add to the Belcourt piece. Create a work of art using the foamies provided. Take 10-15 mins to map this out. Put this aside.
- Post Visit: Glue down all the pieces. Then compile all the tiles to create a collaborative mural for the classroom. Take pictures as documentation and email it to us. I will send to Christi Belcourt to show how her work has influenced student's creative process.

Resources required at school:

Copies of The Wisdom of the Universe, foam core for mounting the final piece, black paper 4x6, foamies, glue sticks

Resources required by presenter:

black paper 4x6, foamies, glue sticks

STOP #2: Respecting the Circle, Manasie Akpaliapik, 1989



KEY LEARNING OUTCOME: CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Learners will develop an understanding and create connections between a variety of art forms, styles and techniques from the past and present that express cultural history and identity in social and community contexts

KEY LEARNING OUTCOME: COMMUNICATION SKILLS

By participating in discussions and active looking, learners will develop both listening and speaking skills, gaining confidence in their ability to engage in conversations about art acquire new language to describe what they see.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Manasie Akpaliapik was born in 1955 in a hunting camp near Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay), Nunavut, on north Baffin Island. Manasie is an Inuit artist who was born in the area that now called Nunavut. He spent his youth in Arctic Bay, relocated to Montreal, then settled in Toronto where he created all of these carvings. Now based in Ottawa and Montreal, Manasie is known for his animated and ambitious sculptures that sympathetically utilize the unique material and structure of bone, ivory and stone. Deeply connected to the culture and traditions of the Arctic, his works reflect a concern for the vulnerability of his homeland. They offer unflinching depictions of social ills that have impacted northern communities and reflect the belief that humans must live in balance with and respect all living things.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Larger Group:

Introduce the sculpture briefly to the students, themes such as place, land, history and storytelling.

Focus on:

Respecting the Circle, view video and images under document camera

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iA3UP3JnU74>

Inventory:

Invite students to look at various angles of the sculpture and the video. Invite students to take a few moments to look at the work,

Prompts:

What do you observe about this work? What catches your attention? What surprises you? What is the work made of, how do you know? What do you think it feels like? What animals do you see?

Materials:

(whalebone, ivory, stone, antler, horn, teeth) and animals (owl, walrus, hare, muskox, narwhal) are from the Canadian Arctic. Artist uses a lot of whalebone from his homeland. "Fresh" whalebone is oily, smelly, and falls apart if you try to carve it. As the bone ages, it ossifies - everything dries out and the muscle tissue hardens. Ossified whalebone looks bubbly and spongy.

ACTIVITY 1: TABLEAUX [ONLY FOR YOUNGER GRADES]

After viewing the video clip, facilitate discussion about the sculpture. What animals did you notice that you didn't before? What animal would you add to represent your land? Pose. How does this sculpture make you feel? Emotions? Movements?

Kids pose like any animal 1) the bear, 2) walrus, and 3) the birds, etc.,

- Have the students make the motion/rhythm of the animals with their bodies.
- Create a new sculpture with your bodies individually. Pose! Freeze!

ACTIVITY 2: TRACING

In front of you, trace the lines of the work. What kind of lines are these? Do they make specific or recognizable shapes? What do you think is going on in this work? What is the artist trying to communicate?

Resources required at school:

Laminated copies

Resources required by presenter:

Laminated copies, close ups of materials

STOP #3:
Untitled (Cows on a Hillside),
Kathleen Munn, c.1916



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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1887 in Toronto, Kathleen Munn was one of the first Canadian artists to embrace abstraction. Little known yet much admired by fellow artists, Munn studied in New York, and during the 1920s travelled to Europe and exhibited with the Group of Seven. Around 1939, she stopped making art due to family obligations and an unresponsive art public in Toronto. She spent the rest of her life here in relative obscurity, only to be rediscovered a decade after her death in 1974.

Seeking inspiration beyond Toronto's conservative art scene, Munn was among the few early 20th-century Canadian artists to experiment with Cubism, Synchronism, and abstraction. She placed herself in the midst of the international modern art movement by studying in New York at the Art Students League, where she won a prestigious first prize. She attended classes between 1912 and 1930, studying with leading abstract artists, such as Stanton MacDonald-Wright, Andrew Dasburg and Max Weber, while receiving foundational training in colour and design theories as well as life drawing. Her studies were complemented by travels to Europe and visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Questions:

What do you observe about this work? What catches your attention? What surprises you? Do you recognize anything? If so, what? What materials do you think the artist used to create this work of art? How do you think the work of art feels and how would it smell? Why? What colours do you see? What materials or tools do you think the artist used to make this art? How does the artist guide us around the painting? What story do you think she wants to convey? The artist did not give this piece a title, what title would you give this piece of art?

MINI ACTIVITY

Students will be given 3 pieces of small paper. Write down THREE using the prompts: I see...I hear...I feel. It can be anything that comes to mind when you see this painting. Create a collaborative poem with the person beside you.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Let's think about trees. Who lives in them? What do they give us? How do they look and smell? How do they grow? Read a few pages from *Picture A Tree*.

ACTIVITY

Guide students to think about the technique of abstraction.

Let's take a closer look at the treatment of the land in this painting. What is growing where? Mother nature is in her glory in this painting. Take a look or a close read of Picture A Tree by Barbara Reid. Let's look at the trees and the ground in the painting and the book. Using the plasticine provided, create a tree from your imagination using texture, colour, line, form and 2D elements, press it onto the cardboard.

Resources required at school:

Cardboard, plasticine, book, toothpicks

Resources required by presenter:

Barbara Munn painting, cardboard, RGB palette, close ups of materials, Picture a Tree by Barbara Reid.